DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 338 763 UD 028 389

AUTHOR Stevens, Carla J.; And Others
TITLE Description of the Lighted Schoolhouse Program (1990-91).
INSTITUTION Houston Independent School District, TX. Dept. of Research and Evaluation.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 27p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *After School Programs; Black Students; *Community Services; Disadvantaged Youth; Economically Disadvantaged; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *High Risk Students; *Homeless People; *Latchkey Children; Low Income Groups; Preschool Education; Program Descriptions; School Districts; Urban Schools; Urban Youth
IDENTIFIERS *Houston Independent School District TX

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study of the Houston (Texas) Independent School District's Lighted Schoolhouse Program, which is designed to serve as an intermediary between homeless children and community service agencies, to provide a range of after-school activities for unattended children, and to provide opportunities for participation of families and volunteers. The program is divided into two components: a shelter, and the YMCA-supported After-School Program. The program is located on the Gregory-Lincoln Education Center campus. The study describes the program and its students, compiles a baseline for future evaluation, and assesses the benefits of the program for students. The total number of students served by the program for August through January 1990-91 was 253, at an average cost of $87 per student. Of those, 198 were served by the shelter component of the program and 118 were served by the after school component. A multi-method approach uncovered the following student data: (1) 76% of the students were Black, 22% were Hispanic, and 1% was White; (2) 33% of the students were classified as prekindergarten through second grade and another 41% were in the fourth through sixth grades; (4) 87% were eligible for free or reduced lunch and 53% of students were classified as being at risk of dropping out of school. Perceived benefits include giving the children an alternative to going home or being on the streets after school where they are often hurt physically or mentally, providing a "home" setting with discipline as well as love and attention for several hours every night, and providing activities and help with homework for students who would not necessarily receive them at home. One table and five bar graphs are included. Six references are appended. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED338763

Description of the Lighted Schoolhouse Program (1990–91)

Stevens, Carla J., M.A.
Tullis, Richard J., Ed.D.
Sanchez, Kathryn S., Ed.D.
Gonzalez, J.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. Sanchez

Houston Independent School District

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

HISD RESEARCH & EVALUATION
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

UD 028 389

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DESCRIPTION OF THE LIGHTED SCHOOLHOUSE PROGRAM 1990–91

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Lighted Schoolhouse Program which was formally implemented on the Gregory-Lincoln Education Center campus in the 1989–90 school year is designed to serve as an intermediary between homeless children and community service agencies, to provide a wide range of after school activities for unattended children, and to provide opportunities for expanded participation of families and community volunteers in the Lighted Schoolhouse program. To provide these services, the Lighted Schoolhouse is divided into two components, the shelter and the YMCA After-School Program.

PROGRAM COST AND FUNDING SOURCE

The Lighted Schoolhouse is funded through HISD's Bureau of Alternative Schools and Programs, the YMCA sustaining fund, and community donations. The total amount allocated by HISD for the YMCA contract, instructional materials, and supplies is $39,700. The total number of students served by both components from August through January was 253. For the first five months of the 1990–91 school year, the average cost per student was $87.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The purpose of this report was to describe the Lighted Schoolhouse program, describe the students served by the program, compile baseline data for future evaluations, and assess the benefits of the program for student participants. The following research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1: How was the program at the Lighted Schoolhouse being implemented?

The Lighted Schoolhouse consists of two components: the shelter serves as a resource and/or alternative home environment for the homeless or unattended children in the area from 3:00–9:30 p.m. and the YMCA After-School Program provides licensed day care, at no cost to the parents, for children from five to ten years of age from 3:00–6:00 p.m. Through these components, the Lighted Schoolhouse provides a variety of physical and enrichment activities for the children, homework assistance, snacks, clothing, school supplies, health care needs, and referrals to social service agencies when specific assistance is required.

Research Question 2: How were students referred/selected to participate in the Lighted Schoolhouse?

Students were referred to the Lighted Schoolhouse by teachers, counselors, or parents of other students who knew of children who had problem home situations, were unattended after school, or were homeless. Children were selected on a first come-first served basis for the YMCA After-School Program.

Research Question 3: What were the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the Lighted Schoolhouse?

The total number of students served by the Lighted Schoolhouse from August 1990 through the end of January 1991 was 253. Of these children, 198 attended the shelter facility and 118 attended the YMCA After-School Program with 63 children attending both facilities. The average daily attendance per month ranged from 11.2 to 26.2 students for the shelter and 52.1 to 59.3 students for the YMCA program. Seventy-six percent of the students were Black, 22% were Hispanic, and 1% was White. Thirty-three percent of the students were classified as kindergarten through second grade and another 41% were in the fourth through sixth grades. Females constituted 52% and males 45% of the population. Ninety-nine percent of the students attended school at the Gregory-Lincoln campus and 87% were eligible for free or reduced lunch. According to the TEA criteria, fifty-three percent of the students were classified as being "at-risk" of dropping out of school.

Research Question 4: What benefits did program staff and teachers perceive that the students were receiving from the Lighted Schoolhouse?

As identified by the program staff and teachers, perceived benefits to students of the Lighted Schoolhouse program included:

- a "home" setting with discipline as well as love and attention for several hours every night,
- much needed role models,
- a safe alternative to going home or being on the streets in the neighborhoods where the children could be hurt physically or mentally,
- a place where they can do homework,
- opportunities to do activities and be involved in organizations which they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to do, and
- a loving, caring environment for those who have an air of hopelessness in their lives.

Research Question 5: What changes in implementation procedures did program staff recommend?

Recommendations by the program staff and teachers included:

- more parental involvement and parenting education,
- more facilities like the Lighted Schoolhouse in other "bad" neighborhoods,
- more publicity for the program including what activities are planned,
- more survival skills or vocational skills type activities for the middle school children,
- a multi-ethnic approach toward staffing and activities, and
- more counseling/group therapy sessions for the children.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LIGHTED SCHOOLHOUSE PROGRAM 1990–91

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Abstract

The Lighted Schoolhouse, administered by the Bureau of Alternative Schools and Programs, is located on the Gregory-Lincoln Education Center campus. It is designed to serve as an intermediary between homeless children and community service agencies, to provide a wide range of after-school activities for unattended children, and to provide opportunities for expanded participation of families and community volunteers in the Lighted Schoolhouse program. The purpose of this report was to: describe the Lighted Schoolhouse program as it is implemented at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center, describe students served by the program, compile baseline data for future evaluations, and assess the benefits of the program for student participants. It was found that 253 individual students were served by the Lighted Schoolhouse program from August 1990 through January 1991; 198 were served by the shelter component of the program and 118 were served by the YMCA After-School Program component of the Lighted Schoolhouse. Seventy-six percent of the students were Black, 86% were classified as prekindergarten through sixth grade, 99% attended Gregory-Lincoln Education Center, 87% were eligible for free or reduced lunch, and 53% were classified as being "at-risk" of dropping out of school. Perceived benefits of the program include giving the children an alternative to going home or being on the streets after school where they can be hurt physically or mentally, providing a "home" setting with discipline as well as love and attention for several hours every night, and providing activities and help with homework for students who would not necessarily receive them at home.

Introduction

The Lighted Schoolhouse was started during the bitter cold spell in January and February of 1989. When the media's attention focused on the fact that many of the homeless who were freezing were children, HISD's General Superintendent decided to open two of HISD's schools to receive the homeless children when the city's shelters had no more room. The schools were Gregory-Lincoln Education Center and Jefferson Davis

High School. On February 3, 1989, the Board of Education approved the Gregory-Lincoln shelter program under the name of the Lighthouse. It was later changed to the Lighted Schoolhouse because the Lighthouse name was being used by a city agency. The program is administered by the Department of Vocational Education/Enrichment Programs, Bureau of Alternative Schools and Programs.

The Lighted Schoolhouse was designed to serve as a referral center for homeless children so that they can be placed in contact with community service agencies, to provide a wide range of after-school activities for unattended children, and to provide for expanded contact and participation with the families of these children. The children who are served by the Lighted Schoolhouse fall into one or more of three categories: homeless, neglected, or undersupervised at home. Some of the children do not have a place to sleep at night. Others do have a place to sleep, but it is not necessarily the same place every night. Often they have to look for new places to stay. These children are "street kids" and are not just teenagers but may be 6, 7, or 8 years of age. The children who attend the Lighted Schoolhouse live in the Fourth Ward, an inner city area near downtown Houston. Often they come from homes where physical abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse, and/or drug dealing is prevalent. Others come from homes where the parent(s) or guardian(s) cannot afford to pay for child care from the time school dismisses until the parent comes home from work. These children are left to care for themselves. Others may come from homes where the parent(s) have left the children to be cared for by other relatives who also have their own children to care for. They often live in small houses where several generations or families live in the same household and where the absence of one child is not missed. As a result, their special needs are not met. In general, these children need attention. They want an alternative. It is the opinion of the Lighted Schoolhouse staff that without encouragement, love, and guidance, many of the students served by the Lighted Schoolhouse will be the dropouts, the substance abusers, and the criminals of tomorrow.

The purpose of this report was to describe the Lighted Schoolhouse program, describe students served by the program, compile baseline data for future evaluations, and assess the benefits of the program for student participants.

The following research questions were addressed:

1. How was the program at the Lighted Schoolhouse being implemented? (See page 6.)

2. How were students referred/selected to participate in the Lighted Schoolhouse? (See page 10.)

3. What were the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the Lighted Schoolhouse? (See page 11.)

4. What benefits did program staff and teachers perceive that the students were receiving from the Lighted Schoolhouse? (See page 16.)

5. What changes in implementation procedures did program staff recommend? (See page 18.)

Review of Literature

A review of the literature suggests that while physical abuse is the most conspicuous form of child maltreatment, neglect is the most prevalent and is equally detrimental (Peterson & Roscoe, 1983). Neglect is defined as the unintentional failure of parents to meet the child's basic physical, social, emotional, or intellectual needs (Peterson & Roscoe, 1983). Neglected children are often from families where a parent is an alcoholic or substance abuser, an abused or neglected child themselves, or where there is much external stress due to an illness of a family member or extreme financial difficulties (Gelardo & Sanford, 1987; Smith, 1988). The effects of abuse or neglect may be manifested in emotional and psychological injuries to the child. Studies have reported higher frequencies of aggression, noncompliance, poor peer relationships, and social skills deficits in maltreated children (Gelardo & Sanford, 1987). Other effects of neglect may include poor sense of identity, depression, low self-esteem, poor problem-solving and learning skills, lack of initiative, fear of failure, and withdrawal (Haase & Kempe, 1990). Data from other studies suggest that a history of prior abuse or neglect is common among juvenile delinquents or those who commit aggressive offenses (Gelardo & Sanford, 1987).

Another form of neglect is the increasing phenomenon of the "latch-key kid." These children come from working families who have few options for the care of their children. The care that is available may be unaffordable or undesirable. As a result, latch-key children take care of themselves when they go home from school (Patton, 1990). The effects on the unattended or latch-key child are similar to other forms of neglect. The children may feel rejected or alienated, develop behavior problems such as delinquency, vandalism, or academic failure, and/or become victims of accidents or violence (Garbarino, 1980).

Many of the symptoms of neglect can be observed by teachers and other school staff who have daily contact with these children. As a result, educators can be effective resources in the identification of child neglect, as well as providers of a safe, secure, and supportive environment for these children (Haase & Kempe, 1990). Because government agencies, such as Child Protective Services, are understaffed and overburdened with large case loads, they are able to concentrate only on the severe abuse or neglect cases. Since more than half of all reportedly abused and neglected children are of school age, schools can provide a safe nurturing environment for these children in an attempt to identify and treat these symptoms before severe damage is caused to the child (Haase & Kempe, 1990). The needs of the neglected child can be met by school programs providing opportunities to become involved in activities specifically designed to enhance knowledge of self, personal expression, and development of living skills (Peterson & Roscoe, 1983).

Methodology

A multi-method approach was used to answer the above stated research questions. To answer evaluation questions 1, 2, 4, and 5, interviews of the co-facilitators, the principal and several teachers at Gregory-Lincoln, and the Downtown YMCA directors were conducted. The interviews provided information about the program description, selection/referral process, implementation procedures, benefits to students, and recommendations concerning procedural program changes.

Attendance information was collected from sign-in sheets that were filled out by the students attending each facility. There were 207 students who attended the Lighted Schoolhouse and 118 students who attended the YMCA After-School Program. These records were then summarized and analyzed for attendance patterns. The names on the sign-in sheets were matched with Gregory-Lincoln's attendance roster to obtain ID numbers and demographic data of students who attend Gregory-Lincoln. For students who were not on Gregory-Lincoln's attendance roster, a search of the Student Master File was made by name to obtain ID numbers and demographic data. There were nine Lighted Schoolhouse students who had signed in using only first names. Because the co-facilitators were unable to identify these nine students, 198 students were included in the shelter component of the study.

Results

Question 1 How was the program at the Lighted Schoolhouse being implemented?

Method

To obtain information about the implementation of the Lighted Schoolhouse program, interviews were conducted of the co-facilitators on January 22, 1991 and at various times through the middle of April. Also an interview of Gregory-Lincoln's principal was conducted on January 24, 1991. These interviews all took place on the Gregory-Lincoln campus. Information concerning the YMCA After School Program (see description on page 8) was obtained from several telephone conversations with Downtown YMCA directors during the end of March and early April.

Findings

Lighted Schoolhouse - Shelter

The Lighted Schoolhouse program consists of two components. The first component serves as a shelter or alternative home environment for the homeless or unattended children in the area. It is open from 3:00–9:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, during the academic year. It is located in a classroom on the Gregory-Lincoln campus designated specifically for the program. The room is set up with two large tables that are used for doing schoolwork or other activities, a desk for the co-facilitators, and a living room area with couches, chairs and a television set. There is also a sink and counter where peanut butter sandwiches are made by the students themselves, with a little "parental" guidance from the co-facilitators. Any HISD student or recent drop-out is welcome, though most who use the facility are Gregory-Lincoln students. (See analysis on page 14.)

The two facilitators are "redirected supernumerary"[1] teachers who act as surrogate parents, role models, and tutors. They provide a caring and nurturing atmosphere while also maintaining the discipline expected in a school environment. The co-facilitators monitor the shelter room, the playground, and keep an eye on the YMCA After-School Program. They also plan various physical and enrichment activities for the students, including forming flag football teams, Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, and outings to

[1] A "redirected supernumerary" was defined by HISD's personnel office as a teacher who is still under contract but whose position has been eliminated. They are then transferred to another school to do whatever the principal at that school needs. Most often they are used as substitute teachers. In this instance, they are being used to staff the Lighted Schoolhouse.

museums, barbecues, movies, and camping trips. Clothing, school supplies, health care needs, and after school snacks are also available as needed through community donations.

In addition, the co-facilitators serve as social workers by assessing the physical or emotional needs of the children and their families. They may make referrals to social service agencies which can then provide the specific assistance required. If the program personnel are unable to place a homeless child with a social service agency, they are prepared to house the child overnight in the shelter room until other arrangements can be made.

From the time the Lighted Schoolhouse program began in February 1989, until May 1989, approximately thirteen children went through the shelter. At that time there was only one facilitator. During that time, five children were housed overnight in the shelter room with three nights being the longest stay. During the 1989–90 school year and as of January 1991, there have been no overnight stays. However, the number of students served on a daily basis increased to the point that a second facilitator was added at the beginning of the 1989–90 school year.

The co-facilitators conduct home visits at the request of Gregory-Lincoln's principal, teachers, or counselors if school personnel are having problems with a child. The purpose of the visit is to learn more about the student's home life. They also act as social service agency resource people for counselors at other HISD schools.

The following is the list of residential facilities, emergency shelters, and social service agencies which the co-facilitators use or recommend on a regular basis:

Agency Contacted	Service Provided
Chimney Rock Center	shelter for ages 13 to 17
Covenant House	shelter for ages 13 to 21
DePelchin Children's Center	shelter for ages 5 to 17
Children's Renaissance Center at Riverside General Hospital	sponsor support groups on campus twice a week for drug and alcohol prevention
Community Artists Collective	conduct art projects with children once a week
Delta Sigma Theta	plan special events for students
Kappa Alpha Alumni Chapter	provide weekly tutors and plan special events
Sheltering Arms	sponsor two activities a month, one is a monthly Birthday party and one is a field trip or game day
City Wide Club of Clubs	supplies and donations
Windsor Village United Methodist Church	school supplies and special needs
Neighborhood Centers	provide training for staff
Christian Community Center	clothing
Coalition for Homeless	resource, advisor, and clothing
Memorial Assistance Ministries	clothing
Saint Theresa Little Flower Thrift Shop	clothing
Sunnyside Christian Church	clothing
United Way	special needs clothing
Volunteers of America	clothing
Dr. Henderson	advisor to program staff
Family Service Center	advisors to program staff
Hope Center for Youth	advisors to program staff

YMCA After-School Program

The second component of the Lighted Schoolhouse program was added in the fall of 1989. It provides licensed day care, at no cost to the parents, for children from five to ten years of age through the YMCA After-School Program. This program is located in the Gregory-Lincoln cafeteria from 3:00–6:00 p.m. The YMCA possesses a Harris County Child Care License. Currently it is not accredited by the National Association for the

Education of Young Children. However, the YMCA plans to seek accreditation within the next two years.

The YMCA provides one site director, three activity coordinators, and additional volunteers. This program is licensed for sixty children. The YMCA maintains a 1:10 to 1:15 staff to student ratio. The After-School Program is designed to offer various simultaneous activities for the children by dividing the cafeteria into four activity centers: homemaking, manipulative games, drama, and tutoring. Outside activities are planned as well. The Downtown YMCA Seniors' Program is one of the many groups which contributes volunteers for tutoring and preparing snacks.

Funding/Number of Students Served and Cost

The YMCA After-School Program is funded by a $30,000 contract from HISD through the Bureau of Alternative Schools and Programs. An additional $9,700 is allocated by the district for instructional materials and supplies. The YMCA covers any extra costs, over and above the $30,000 HISD contract, from the YMCA sustaining fund. It expects to have contributed an additional $3,000 to $5,000 by the end of the year for materials and food.

The total number of students served by both components of the Lighted Schoolhouse from August through January was 253 students. With the total HISD allocated amount of $39,700 for the school year, it can be calculated that the cost to HISD per student served for the first five months of the 1990–91 school year was $87.[2]

---

[2] This does not include the co-facilitators' salaries for the reason that they are redirected supernumeraries.

Question 2 How were students referred/selected to participate in the Lighted Schoolhouse?

Method

To obtain referral and selection criteria, interviews were conducted of the co-facilitators on January 22, 1991, and at various times through the middle of April. Also an interview of Gregory-Lincoln's principal was conducted on January 24, 1991. Information concerning the YMCA After-School Program was obtained from several telephone conversations with Downtown YMCA directors during the end of March and early April.

Findings

Students were referred to the Lighted Schoolhouse by teachers or counselors who were aware of problem home situations or knew of students who just needed more one-on-one attention outside of the classroom. Children were also referred by parents of other school children who were aware that the child was unattended after school or homeless.

Before the child can be admitted into the YMCA After-School Program, the parent(s) or guardian(s) must fill out an application form. Since the majority of the children in the Gregory-Lincoln area are disadvantaged, they qualify for the child care program. Therefore, the students are accepted on a first come-first served basis, not necessarily on the basis of the information supplied by the application form.

Question 3 What were the demographic characteristics of the students participating in the Lighted Schoolhouse?

Method

Attendance information was collected from sign-in sheets that were filled out by the students attending each facility. These records were then summarized and analyzed for attendance patterns. Lighted Schoolhouse shelter attendance data were available for five days in August, nineteen days in September, twenty-three days in October, twelve days in November, eight days in December, and twenty days in January. YMCA attendance data were available for fourteen days in October, one day in November, eight days in December, and fourteen days in January. Based on these conditions, this analysis was limited to the days for which data were available.

Findings

Attendance Patterns

The total number of students served by the Lighted Schoolhouse shelter from August 1990 through the end of January 1991 was 198 while the total number of students served by the YMCA After-School Program from October 1990 through January 1991 was 118. Of the 198 children who attended the Lighted Schoolhouse shelter, 31.8% also attended the YMCA After-School Program. Conversely, 53.4% of the children attending the YMCA Program went to the Lighted Schoolhouse shelter at some point in time. In total, 253 children were served by at least one component of the Lighted Schoolhouse.

Figure 1 illustrates the average daily attendance figures for each component of the Lighted Schoolhouse program.[3] The lowest average daily attendance for the shelter was in November with eleven children. The two months with the highest averages were August and September. These were also the two months during which the YMCA After-School Program was not operating. The YMCA is licensed to care for sixty children. With its average daily attendance ranging from 52 to 59 children, it is evident that the YMCA program is operating at or near capacity.

[3] YMCA average daily attendance figures were calculated for October, December, and January. Because attendance data were provided for only one day in November, that month was not included in the average daily attendance analysis.

Figure 1
Average Daily Attendance by Month at Lighted Schoolhouse Shelter
and YMCA After-School Program

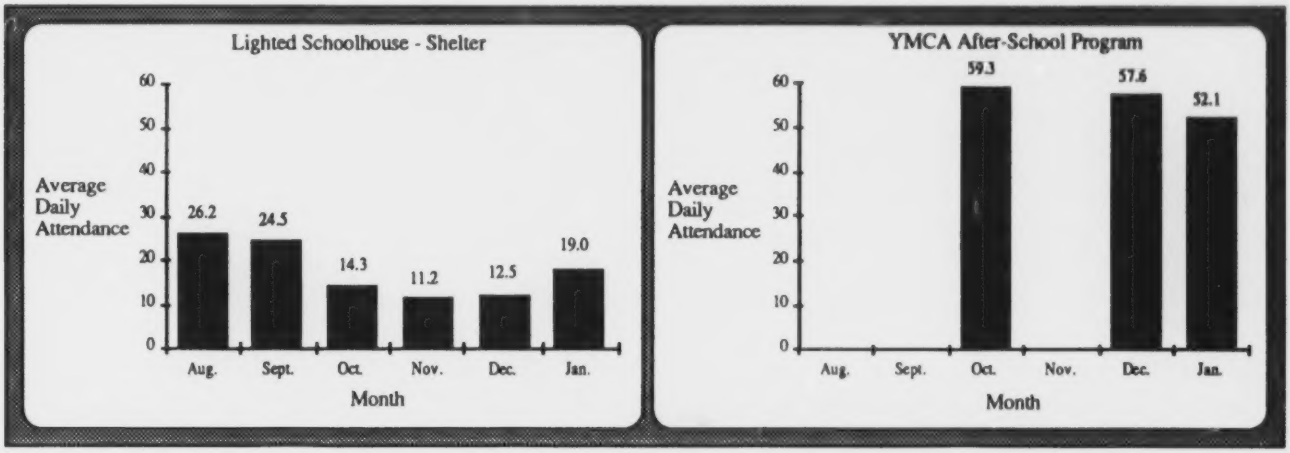
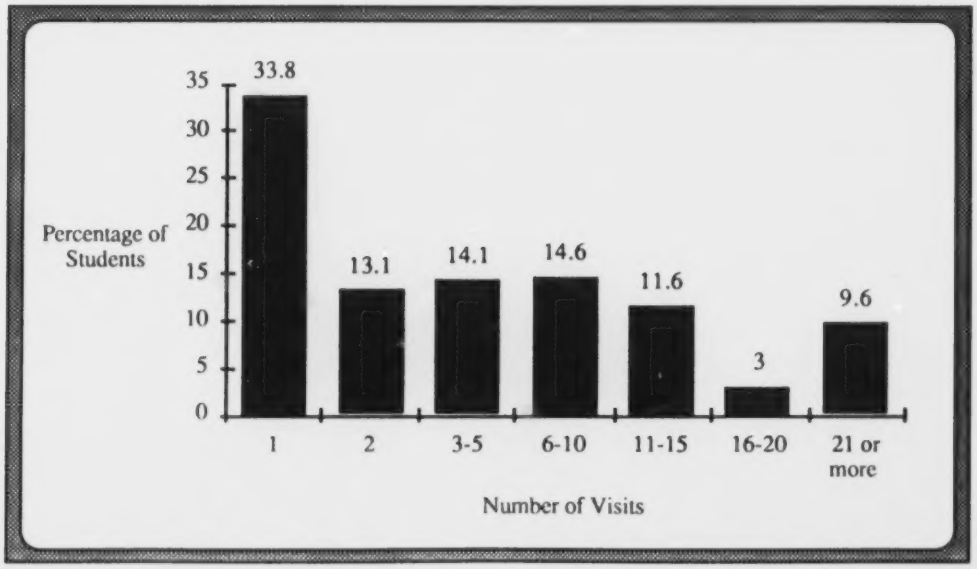


Figure 2 displays the frequency with which students go to the Lighted Schoolhouse shelter. Over 33% of the 198 children went to the facility only once during the six months. However, 9.6% visited 21 or more times, including one child who attended 50 times, one 62 times, and one 63 times. Attendance information was recorded for 63 days during the six months.

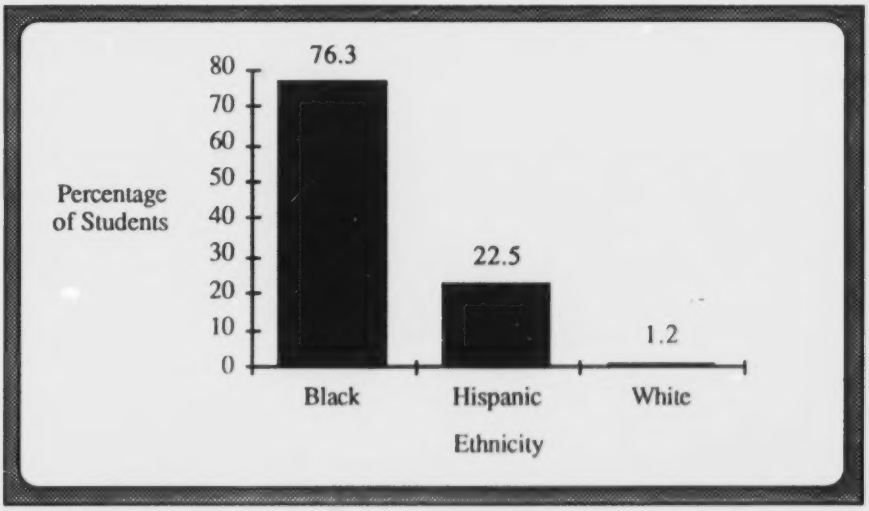
Figure 2
Percentage of Students by Number of Visits to Lighted Schoolhouse Shelter
From August Through January



Demographic Analysis

The demographic composition of the children who were served by the Lighted Schoolhouse program is examined below. All 253 students who attended either component of the Lighted Schoolhouse were included in this analysis. Figure 3 graphically depicts the ethnicity of the students. Over 76% were Black, 22.5% were Hispanic, and 1.2% were White. This compares to Gregory-Lincoln's ethnicity of 45.6% Black, 41.5% Hispanic, 10.7% White, and 2.3% other.[4]

Figure 3
Percentage of Students by Ethnicity



The Lighted Schoolhouse appears to be utilized most by children sixth grade and under. Figure 4 indicates that 32.9 % of the children were classified as kindergarten through second grade. Another 41.4% were in fourth through sixth grade. There were no students who signed in who were over the eighth grade classification.

With regard to gender, the students were fairly evenly distributed. Females constituted 52.2% of the population and males the other 47.8%. In comparison, the Gregory-Lincoln student population was 54.5% female and 45.5% male.[5] The percentage of students per grade for males and females is also exhibited in Figure 4. Female students outnumbered the male students in prekindergarten through first grades, in fourth grade, and

---

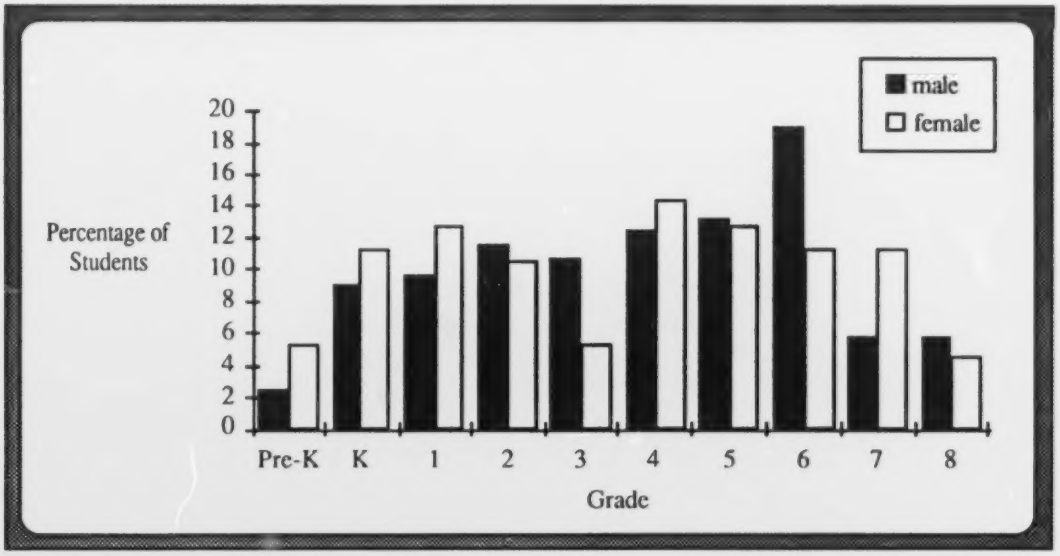
[4] Unofficial Fall Survey as of October 1, 1990, as prepared by HISD's Pupil Accounting Department.

[5] Unofficial Fall Survey as of October 1, 1990, as prepared by HISD's Pupil Accounting Department.

more distinctly in seventh grade. Males were more prominent in the second, third, fifth, sixth and eighth grades with the greater difference appearing in the third and sixth grades.

Figure 4

Percentage of Students in Each Grade by Gender



As previously mentioned, the majority of the children served by the Lighted Schoolhouse program were registered for school at Gregory-Lincoln as of March 1991. Seventy-one percent attended elementary school and 28% attended middle school at Gregory-Lincoln Education Center. Three students were registered at other HISD schools as of March 1991. These campuses were Durkee elementary, Holden elementary, and Black middle schools.

Of the 253 students who attended either component of the Lighted Schoolhouse, 87% were eligible for free or reduced lunch. In addition, 53% of the students were identified as being at-risk. To be classified as "at-risk," a student must meet one or more of the following conditions:

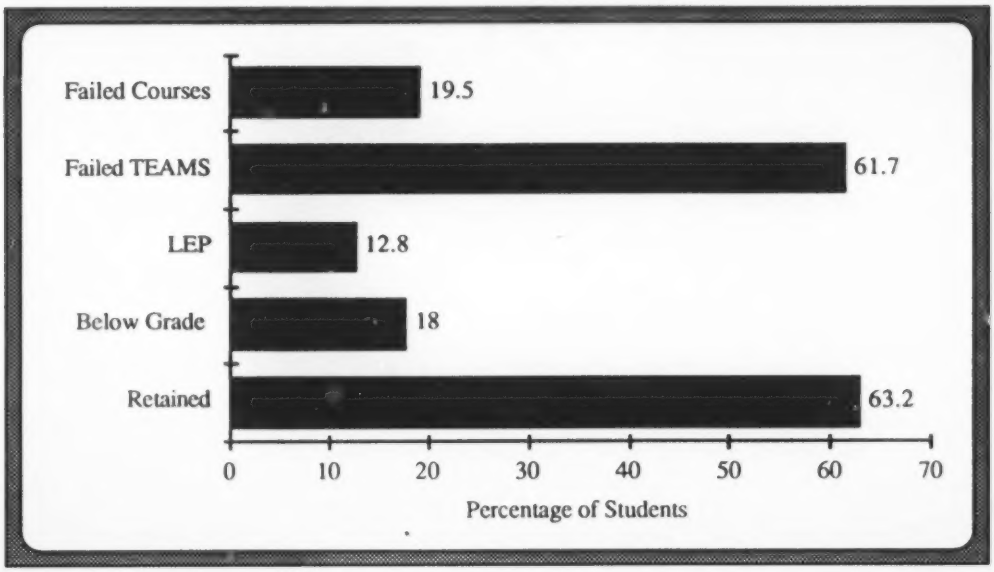
1) has been retained one or more times in grades 1–6;
2) is two or more years below grade level in reading or mathematics;
3) is of limited English proficiency;
4) failed one or more sections of the most recent TEAMS test; and
5) failed at least two courses in one or more semesters.[6]

Figure 5 illustrates the number of students who were classified at-risk for the various reasons. It should be noted that the categories are not mutually exclusive, therefore, the sum of the percents will be greater than 100.

---

[6] Summarized from Tex. Educ. Agency, 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 75.195 (West Supp. 1990) (Alternatives to Social Promotion).

Figure 5
Percentage of Students Classified At-Risk by Reason



Question 4 What benefits did program staff and teachers perceive that the students were receiving from the Lighted Schoolhouse program?

Method

To obtain information on the perceived benefits of the Lighted Schoolhouse program, interviews were conducted of the co-facilitators on January 22, 1991 and at various times through the middle of April. Also an interview of Gregory-Lincoln's principal was conducted on January 24, 1991. Two teachers who have students in their classes who attend the Lighted Schoolhouse were interviewed in early April.

Findings

During the interview of the principal at Gregory-Lincoln, it was stated that teachers can identify children at 6, 7, or 8 years of age who may be possible dropouts, children with problem behavior, or children with tendencies to violence. To resolve these behaviors, one option available to school officials is to refer these children to psychiatrists. However, it is more than likely these behaviors stem from neglect or under-supervision at home. It was also stated that classroom behavior for children attending the Lighted Schoolhouse has improved because they are put in a "home" setting with discipline as well as love and attention for several hours every night, which these children are not receiving at their own homes. Before the Lighted Schoolhouse program was implemented, the principal would leave at 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. and there would still be forty or fifty children "hanging around" the school. Now the school building is open until 9:00 p.m. They can work on homework, get a small snack or sandwich, or do other activities with adult supervision and attention.

Another benefit of the Lighted Schoolhouse program is that since many of the students are Black, having Black professional adults as tutors and co-facilitators gives many of these children much needed role models in their lives. Other benefits of the Lighted Schoolhouse as indicated during the principal, teachers, and program staff interviews include the opinions that the Lighted Schoolhouse offers to the children:

- an alternative to going home or being on the streets in the neighborhoods where they can be hurt physically or mentally;
- a place where they enjoy going and where they feel safe;
- a place where they can discuss what they learned or what they did in school that day with someone who cares or understands;
- field trips outside of the classroom experience;

- co-facilitators who serve as a buffer between parents and teachers, and between students and teachers;
- the opportunity to share their situation with the co-facilitators when they are embarrassed to tell their teachers their personal problems;
- a structured setting in which there are a variety of activities from which to choose;
- Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts for those who would not have otherwise had an opportunity to be in these organizations;
- a place to do their homework after school with teachers or community volunteers who are there for them; and
- a loving and caring environment for those who have an air of hopelessness in their lives.

Question 5 What changes in implementation procedures did program staff recommend?

Method

Recommendations were made by the program staff during interviews conducted of the co-facilitators on January 22, 1991 and at various times through the middle of April. Also an interview of Gregory-Lincoln's principal was conducted on January 24, 1991. Two teachers who have students in their classes who attend the Lighted Schoolhouse were interviewed in early April.

Findings

The co-facilitators indicated that what is needed is more parental involvement and that this program cannot relieve parents of their responsibilities. The parents need to be educated about parenting and child care. They also need to see their children interacting in the nurturing environment of the Lighted Schoolhouse.

The program staff also indicated a need for this program to be replicated at other inner city schools in "bad" neighborhoods. Although this facility is open to all HISD students, those who utilize it are either from Gregory-Lincoln or live in the neighborhood immediately surrounding Gregory-Lincoln. The reason for this attendance pattern was most likely because transportation is not provided by the district.

The staff believed that they could better serve homeless children if the program was publicized or more well known. In general, it was their perception that principals, teachers, and counselors at other schools in the district remain unaware of the resources available and facilities provided by the Lighted Schoolhouse.

Other recommendations made by the program staff, principal, and teachers include:

- more survival skills or vocational skills type activities or clubs for the middle school children;
- career opportunity sessions and character education to build the self concept of the older children;
- more publicity for the program including what activities are planned;
- more teacher involvement - meetings once a month or semester with the co-facilitators who are excellent resources for information on these children;
- the need to include Hispanic and White personnel to give the program a multi-ethnic approach;
- ESL classes or tutoring in English for Hispanic youth;

- more counseling / group therapy sessions; and
- the need to have a wide variety of activities to keep interest up because children will not keep coming if they become bored with the activities provided.

Discussion

The Lighted Schoolhouse, consisting of the shelter and the YMCA After-School Program, is serving students from the Gregory-Lincoln area. It was expressed by all the people interviewed that this program is providing a safe, caring, and nurturing environment to children who may not otherwise have a place to go after school. It is probable that many of these children are abused, neglected, or homeless. This program provides them with activities, snacks, tutoring, and attention from caring adults. The co-facilitators are also very involved in obtaining the necessary assistance for these children from the appropriate agencies. Their focus is to break the cycle of abuse or neglect and to ease its effects on the children before it becomes irreversible.

Although 33.8% of the children who attended the Lighted Schoolhouse from August through January only attended the facilities once, there were others who attended on a more regular basis. This includes one child who attended every day for which attendance records were available. Between the shelter and the YMCA program, 253 individual students were served by the Lighted Schoolhouse. The shelter served 198 children while the YMCA served 118 children. Sixty-three of these children attended both facilities. These numbers may be conservative since signing in at the shelter is not mandatory. Also the attendance records were incomplete for the YMCA program. In addition, children who were not identifiable because of only signing in with initials or first names were excluded from this analysis.

Because over 76% of the children who utilized the Lighted Schoolhouse from August through January were Black, and 86% were classified as sixth grade or under, several of the people interviewed recommended that more emphasis through staffing and activities be put on attracting Hispanic and White youth as well as more middle school children. Also, 99% of the children attended Gregory-Lincoln Education Center. This led to the recommendation that the program be expanded through the provision of either district transportation or program implementation at other HISD schools. Based on the fact that over 87% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch and that 53% of the students were classified as being "at-risk" of dropping out of school, it is evident that the program is being utilized by a population with special needs.

Several limitations of this study were the ability to assess the specific reasons why each child attended the Lighted Schoolhouse, what their special needs were, and in what ways they were individually served by the program. To address these issues, case studies of the children who attended the Lighted Schoolhouse would be needed. However, the volume of children, their age, and the sensitivity of their home situations would make this a difficult process. As a result, this data was not included in this report. However, future evaluations of the Lighted Schoolhouse should consider the inclusion of the above stated research questions.

References

Garbarino, J. (1980). Latchkey children: Getting the short end of the stick? **Vital Issues**. 30, 3.

Gelardo, M. S., & Sanford, E. E. (1987). Child abuse: A review of the literature. **School Psychology Review**. 16 (2) 137–155.

Haase, C. C., & Kempe, R. S. (1990). The school and protective services. **Education & Urban Society**. 22 (3) 258–269.

Patton, C. (1990). **"What do I do until you get home?" School-age child care in Texas.** The Houston Committee for Private Sector Initiatives: Houston, pp 1–6.

Peterson, K.L., & Roscoe, B. (1983). Neglected children: Suggestions for early childhood educators. **Childhood Education**. 60 (1) 2–5.

Smith, B. K. (1988). Neglect wears many faces. **Academic Therapy**. 24 (1) 37–42.

HISD
RESEARCH &
EVALUATION
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT